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Message Text

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DEPT PASS TOKYO, OTTAWA, PARIS, IAEA VIENNA FOR INFO

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MNUC, PARM, KS, FR, CA
SUBJECT: ROK NUCLEAR REPROCESSING

1. UNDER INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE PRIME MINISTER AND IN ABSENCE MINISTER SCIENCE OF TECHNOLOGY (MOST), VICE MINISTER OF MOST YI CHONG-SOK, TOGETHER WITH KAERI PRESIDENT YUN YONG-KU CALLED ON AMBASSADOR DEC. 16 TO ELICIT CONCRETE INFORMATION REGARDING U.S. OFFER ASSISTANCE IN NUCLEAR FIELD IN EVENT ROKG AGREES TO CANCELLATION FRENCH REPROCESSING FACILITY CONTRACT. EXPLAINING THAT MOST HAD BEEN ASKED TO PREPARE POLICY OPTIONS ON THIS QUESTION FOR PRIMIN, VICE MIN YI ASKED FOR ANSWERS TO DETAILED QUESTIONS REGARDING EXTENT PROPOSED U.S. SUPPORT BY DEC. 20. TALKING POINT PAPER CONTAINING QUESTIONS WHICH VICE MINISTER LEFT AT END OF MEETING BEING FORWARDED SEPTEL. IN BRIEF, VICE MINISTER'S QUESTIONS FOLLOW:

(A) WOULD USG BE WILLING PROVIDE TECHNOLOGY AND CAPITAL ASSISTANCE TO COMMERCIAL FUEL FABRICATION PROJECT;

(B) WHEN AND WHERE WOULD ASIAN REGIONAL NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING CENTER BE ESTABLISHED, WHAT WOULD IT DO, WHO WOULD PARTICIPATE, WHAT WOULD BE ROK ROLE, AND WOULD U.S. TRAIN KOREAN TECHNICIANS IN ADVANCE;

(C) WOULD USG GIVE SUPPORT AND TRAINING FOR ROK LONG RANGE
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NUCLEAR POWER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

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CAPABILITY, REACTOR SAFETY, WASTE MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY, AND WOULD USG ALLOW EMPLOYMENT BY KOREA OF AMERICAN EXPERTS REQUIRED FOR THESE PROJECTS;

(D) WILL USG GUARANTEE ENRICHMENT SERVICES TO MEET ALL FUTURE KOREAN REQUIREMENTS AND REPROCESSING SERVICES BEFORE COMMERCIAL OPERATION OF MULTI-NATIONAL REGIONAL REPROCESSING CENTER;

(E) WILL USG ASSIST ROK WITH LOANS FOR PURCHASE OF U.S. NATURAL URANIUM AND NUCLEAR POWER REACTORS.

2. IN RESPONSE AMB SAID THESE WERE LEGITIMATE QUESTIONS BUT ANSWERS WOULD INEVITABLY TAKE CONSIDERABLE TIME. HE REITERATED WHAT WE HAVE SAID BEFORE THAT WE WISH EXPANDED COOPERATION, AND HE SAID HE WOULD GO BACK TO WASHINGTON FOR AS MUCH IN WAY OF DETAIL AS COULD BE PROVIDED. AT SAME TIME HE WAS DOUBTFUL WE COULD BE MUCH MORE SPECIFIC AT THIS TIME. MORE SPECIFICALLY, AMB MADE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL POINTS REGARDING QUESTION:

(A) WE HAVE INDICATED GENERAL SUPPORT FOR FUEL FABRICATION TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER BUT TRANSFER FROM U.S. WOULD ENTAIL EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION WITH U.S. PROPRIETORY INTERESTS BEFORE SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS COULD BE MADE;

(B) IAEA DETAILED STUDY OF MULTI-NATIONAL REPROCESSING CENTER WOULD HAVE TO BE COMPLETED PRIOR OUR BEING ABLE TO ANSWER SPECIFIC QUESTIONS REGARDING CENTER AND TO DETERMINE ROKG ROLE IN SUCH CENTER. IAEA STUDY NOT TO BE COMPLETED UNTIL END OF 1976, WHICH YI ACKNOWLEDGED. AS REGARDS TRAINING PRIOR ESTABLISHMENT OF CENTER, AMBASSADOR SAID HE WOULD INQUIRE OF WASHINGTON;

(C) WE HAVE ALREADY PROVIDED SOME TRAINING ON DESIGN, MANUFAC-TURE, WASTE DISPOSAL, AND SAFETY ASPECTS NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS. AMBASSADOR SAID HE WOULD INQUIRE REGARDING TRAININGPOSSIBILITIES IN THESE AREAS. AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT TRANSFER OF DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING CAPABILITY HAS INVOLVED PROPRIETORY INTERESTS;

(D) AS WE HAVE SAID ROKG COULD RELY ON THE U.S. FOR FUTURE

ENRICHMENT SERVICES; AS FOR REPROCESSING SERVICES AMBASSADOR SAID HE WOULD CONSULT WASHINGTON;

(E) WE HAVE BEEN PREPARED TO SUPPORT FINANCING OF ADVANCED NUCLEAR COOPERATION IN PRINCIPLE, IF NO OTHER PROBLEMS. EXTENT AND SPECIFICS REGARDING LOANS WOULD, OF COURSE, REQUIRE DETAILED DISCUSSION AND KNOWLEDGE OF ROK PLANS.

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3. IN MORE GENERAL VEIN AMB THEN REMINDED VICE MINISTER AND KAERI PRESIDENT THAT ISSUE AT HAND WAS NOT ONLY TECHNICAL MATTER; RATHER IT WAS POLITICAL ISSUE OF HIGHEST ORDER.DECISION COULD NOT BE MADE ON TECHNICAL GROUNDS ALONE. WHILE USG WOULD DO WHAT IT COUGD TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL DETAILS, INEVITABLY FULL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS POSED WOULD TAKE TIME TO DEVELOP AND IN MANY CASES WOULD REQUIRE EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION BETWEEN U.S. AND KOREA. REAL CONSIDERATION FOR KOREANS AT THIS POINT, WHICH AMBASSADOR WISHED CONVEYED TO PRIME MINISTER, WAS WHETHER KOREA PREPARED JEOPARDIZE AVAILABILITY OF BEST TECHNOLOGY AND LARGEST FINANCING CAPACITY WHICH ONLY U.S. COULD OFFER, AS WELL AS VITAL PARTNERSHIP WITH U.S., NOT ONLY IN NUCLEAR AND SCIENTIFIC AREAS BUT IN BROAD POLITICAL AND SECURITY AREAS. ROKG HAD TO WEIGH ADVANTAGES OF THIS KIND OF SUPPORT AND COOPERATION WHICH USG COULD PROVIDE AGAINST THE FRENCH OPTION.

4. AMBASSADOR THEN ASKED WHETHER ROKG PREPARED TO HOLD DECISION ON FRENCH REPROCESSING FACILITY PURCHASE IN ABEYANCE UNTIL U.S. HAD PROVIDED ANSWERS TO VICE MINISTER'S QUESTIONS. VICE MINISTER SAID HE COULD NOT COMMIT ROKG OFFICIALLY, BUT HE FELT CONFIDENT FRENCH REPROCESSING FACILITY PURCHASE WOULD BE KEPT IN A HOLD STATUS PENDING U.S. REPLY. HOWEVER, FINAL DECISION ON THAT MATTER WOULD BE MADE BY PRIME MINISTER PENDING RECOMMENDATIONS HE RECEIVED FROM MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.

5. IN COURSE CONVERSATION VICE MINISTER NOTED NEED FOR ROKG TO DIVERSIFY ITS TECHNOLOGY SOURCES ADDING THAT ROK NO LONGER GETTING AS MUCH SCIENTIFIC ASSISTANCE FROM U.S. AS IN PAST, ALTHOUGH U.S. HELP MOST DESIRABLE. AMB AGREED ON DESIRABILITY ROK DIVERSIFYING ITS ACQUISITION OF TECHNOLOGY. BUT, HE AGAIN POINTED OUT, ROKS SHOULD CONSIDER VERY CAREFULLY BROAD AREAS OF COOPERATION AND SUPPORT THAT POTENTIALLY AVAILABLE FROM U.S. IN ALL AREAS OF OUR CLOSE RELATIONSHIP.

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6. COMMENT: AT THIS POINT, IT IS DIFFICULT TO DISCERN THE REAL MOTIVATION FOR APPROACH BY VICE MINISTER YI. HE RECOGNIZED THAT QUESTIONS RAISED WERE NOT PRONE TO READY AND FULL RESPONSE BUT WAS UNDER INSTRUCTIONS NEVERTHELESS SEEK MORE DETAILS ON OUR POSITIVE OFFERS.

7. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE ROKG OFFICIALS ARE SEEKING RATIONALE IN TERMS OF POSITIVE GAINS FOR PULLING OUT OR SUSPENDING OF FRENCH PROJECT, WITH TECHNICAL GROUNDS PROVIDING BETTER FACESAVER THAN POLITICAL ARGUMENTS. THIS APPROACH WOULD PERMIT REVERSAL WITHOUT DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH PRESIDENT PARK. THEY MAY ALSO BE BARGAINING WITH US TO RAISE THE ANTE FOR WITHDRAWING FROM FRENCH PROJECT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY MIGHT BE STALLING US AND TRYING TO DEMONSTRATE U.S. PROPOSAL IS ONLY BROAD GENERALITIES

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AND INADEQUATE BASIS FOR CANCELLING FRENCH PROJECT. I TRIED,
INTER ALIA TO HEAD THIS OFF WITH MY INITIAL RESPONSE.

8. IN ORDER TO GAIN FURTHER CLARIFICATION, I HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH
WITH PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARY-GENERAL KIM CHOM-YOM. HE ASSURED
ME THAT ANY FURTHER FINAL ACTION ON PURCHASE OF FRENCH
PLANT WILL BE HELD OFF UNTIL OUR REPLY RECEIVED. SECONDLY, HE
CONFIRMED THAT HE HAS REVIEWED REPORTS ON MY APPROACH AND
PRESIDENT PARK FULLY AWARE OF HIGH POLITICAL STAKES INVOLVED.
PROBLEM WOULD THEREFORE BE GIVEN FULLEST RECONSIDERATION WHEN
OUR REPLY RECEIVED AND STUDIED. AFTER APPARENTLY CONFERRING
WITH PRESIDENT PARK, HE URGED ME TO DELAY APPROACH TO PRESIDENT
UNTIL THEN.

9. WHILE THIS GAMBIT MAY BE TRAP TO ENSNARE US, IT AFFORDS US
A LITTLE DAYLIGHT. I RECOMMEND WE TEST IT SINCE WE HAVE AT LEAST
BLUE HOUSE ASSURANCES OF DELAY IN FINALIZING FRENCH PURCHASE.
I REALIZE ALL QUESTIONS RAISED BY KOREANS ARE IMPOSSIBLE TO
ANSWER DEFINITEVELY AT THIS TIME, AND I HAVE SO WARNED THEM,
AND THAT THERE IS TYPICAL ELEMTNT OF KOREAN BARGAINING. I URGE
NEVERTHELESS THAT WE BE AS FORTHCOMING AND POSITIVE AS POSSIBLE.
WE HAVE LITTLE TO LOST AND A LOT TO GAIN BY SPELLING OUT IN
MORE DETAIL HOW MUCH MORE WE HAVE TO OFFER ROKG PEACEFUL
NUCLEAR AMBITIONS THAN THE FRENCH.

10. INCIDENTALLY, I HAVE ALSO BEEN IN TOUCH WITH FONMIN KIM
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DONG-JO AND HE NOW FULLY RECOGNIZES THAT THIS IS A MATTER OF
HIGHEST POLITICAL IMPORTANCE, AFFECTING BROAD SPECTRUM OF
ROKG-US RELATIONS.
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